

Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

Boise, Idaho

February, 1997

Volume 1, Number 2

News

Thanks to all of you for the positive response to the first issue of this newsletter! It was great to hear from you. Not too many of you answered the questions I posed in the January issue. C'mon, guys! Let's hear your opinions.

Mike Fritz resurfaced an item we had discussed many years ago: an Idaho token collector meeting at a central location over a summer weekend. Thoughts? I'd like to do something like that, but it really would be best to schedule and locate it so nearly all active collectors could attend. Who wants to step up to organizing it?

Lynn Langdon

Lynn Langdon suffered a stroke in 1995, so he is not actively collecting. If you have traded with Lynn in the past, I am sure he would appreciate a card. Best wishes, Lynn!

Remember the McTy & Stevens mail bid?

Back in 1977, McTy & Stevens had a series of mail bid sales in METCA. A number of nice Idaho tokens were featured in the sale, but that is where I lost track of them. If anyone knows the whereabouts of the following tokens from those sales, I would appreciate a note. I need to photograph, or at least get good rubbings or descriptions of them.

Grangeville: GR-7(A) Smith's Smoke Shop // 50¢

Lapwai: LAP-3 S. J. Hayes Pool Hall // 5¢

How many Idaho tokens?

Comments from Mike Fritz and Rudy Burns about the prototype format I presented for the Idaho token checklist in the January issue made me stop and think. Mike figured that at 9 varieties per page, he would have to hire a moving company to haul the book around. He's right—the current count of token entries in my database is 5327 and that would make for more pages than Hemphill had for the Oregon book. So I will have to compress things to make the size manageable. Get your optometrist appointments made early!

The 5327 number includes all the varieties I have catalogued to date, but realize that multiple town tokens take up a separate entry under each town. That reduces to about 5000 the number of actual token varieties. There are 326 towns included in this figure, not counting the town name spelling errors and those which are not really new towns. Emmitt, Priest Lake, Soda Springs, Utah, and several others fall in this category. By the way, did you know that all of the known tokens from "Clarks Fork" are technically in error? The town is correctly called Clark Fork.

Meet Robert Higdem

Robert Higdem called me the other evening. He is new to the Idaho token collecting fraternity but is sharing our fascination with the local history behind trade tokens. Robert recently purchased a number of tokens from the John Gold collection, so he has a dandy start on the hobby. Have you ever noticed that when anyone starts a collection of Idaho tokens, they very quickly stir up tokens which are "new listings"? I think that is great, and goes to show that there are lots of tokens yet to be put in our collections.

Speaking of getting started...

I'll start this off with my own experiences, but I am sure all the other collectors would be interested in reading about how you got started collecting Idaho tokens. Please send me a couple of paragraphs and I'll start including them in future issues.

In 1963 while a Junior at Minidoka County High School near Rupert, I was a member of the school coin club. Most of our meeting time was spent looking through bags of pennies looking for the 1909-SVDB we knew was going to show up. At one meeting, one of the members brought in several tokens to show the rest of us. From that point on, all Lincoln Cents looked alike to me and I switched collecting interests. I traded some Mercury dimes for the seven tokens and we both went away happy. I started my collection with tokens from Gooding, Oakley, Richfield, Rupert, Shoshone, and Twin Falls. My father got my next tokens for me from a friend of his who had some from Boise. I thought at the time that there would be some interesting history behind these tokens, and that it would be fun to research them.

After graduation from high school, I headed for the University of Idaho. While there I joined the Palouse Empire Coin Club and met Henry Ankcorn, a wonderful gentleman from Palouse, WA. Henry had researched and built a nice display of Palouse tokens with a drawing of the town's Main Street in 1910 as a backdrop. I added more Idaho tokens to my collection with Henry's help.

In 1966 I discovered that Frank Schell, who was writing the coin question and answer "Money Box" column in the Twin Falls Times-News, had gotten some questions on Idaho tokens and was also starting a collection. When I first wrote Frank with my list of finds, he said that he had recorded over 100 so far, but had seen none of mine. And on we went...

How handy...

From the Twin Falls Times for September 17, 1908 in the news items from Buhl: "The calaboose, back of the Idle Hour Saloon, is now finished and ready for use". A recently discovered trade mirror from the Idle Hour Saloon, Patton & Wilson, Props., Buhl, Idaho, is pictured on the back cover of Hal Dunn's Catalog of Western Good For Trade Mirrors. Andrew Doran ("Andy") Wilson came to Buhl in 1906 and in 30 days had constructed and was conducting the Idle Hour Saloon in partnership with Jim Patton. They added a restaurant the next year, but was refused a renewal of their saloon license in 1908 by the Twin Falls



County Commission. Andy Wilson then moved to Twin Falls to work in a saloon there, later owning one. The county voted to go dry in 1909, so he returned to farm and raise sheep near Buhl. In 1920 he moved into Buhl, where he became Chief of Police from 1921 to 1926. In 1926 he opened a cigar store with pool and card tables and a candy counter in the old Hotel Buhl building. This business is represented by B-10, ANDY'S CIGAR STORE / BUHL / IDAHO and its six varieties including three mavericks: ANDY'S / CIGAR STORE.

Regarding trade mirrors

If you have not already seen it, Hal Dunn's catalog is quite a treat. Dunn has classified the mirrors by the picture on the obverse—he lists 130 different "picture types" of stock artwork with color photographs of each, plus he includes black and white pictures of many of the custom obverses. It contains 47 varieties from Idaho—since then Rudy Burns offered a new variety from Troy in a November, 1996 ATCO mail bid sale, making 48 known from Idaho. To me, this is a surprisingly large number of mirrors from such a small state as Idaho. Only four of these varieties are shown as 2 known; the rest are unique.

Several Idaho collectors contributed information to help with this specialty interest book, available either directly from Dunn (P. O. Box 5597, Elko, NV 89802) or through Koppenhaver Press (P. O. Box 34056, Granada Hills, CA 91394). Postpaid prices are \$40.25 softbound or \$67.75 autographed hardbound

For the "one that got away"

We all have been shown tokens which we have tried to obtain for our collections, but cannot strike a deal. If you think the piece may be a "new" listing, please try to get a good rubbing for the cataloguer (me). A literal description of both sides with an accurate size and material description will do if getting a rubbing is impossible.

A change in attribution

There have been a number of stories circulating about a maverick Civilian Conservation Corps token. The piece is

CCC CO. / R. F. P. / 240
GOOD FOR / CTS. 5 CTS. / IN TRADE
21mm round aluminum



Long held to be both Santa and Marble Creek, Idaho, I had it catalogued as Santa, SNT-2. Recently an example was in a mail bid where R. F. P. was said to stand for Renfro Fire Patrol. Now I have put together two pieces of information to place the usage of the token at Marble Creek only. First, from the National Archives, Company 240, a "junior", "white" company was organized at Camp Dix, New Jersey. On June 26, 1933, they were assigned to project F-2 (a forestry project) at Lewiston, Idaho. On September 26, 1933 they were assigned to F-116 at Calder, on May 11, 1934 to F-157, Camp Renfro, at Santa, and on October 31, 1934 to F-117 at Marble Creek. They were redesignated as Company 1970 on about May 1, 1935.

Then, from the CCC Review, the newspaper of the Fort Wright District of the CCC, in its January 24, 1935 issue, is a directory listing Captain Ray F. Powers as the commander of Company 240 (hence the initials), and the following news article:

Lt. Carper of Marble Creek Has Idea

Marble Creek - According to Lt. Carper, officer in charge of the canteen at F-117, Marble Creek, he is going to have metal slugs made to replace the tickets that are now in use at the canteen.

These books are very expensive and a large number of them are used. Each member is allowed to get one of the books and pay for it on pay day. With the metal slugs, they can be used over again each month, saving a large printing bill. The CCC Review is passing this on to other camps as we think it is a fine idea. The first cost is all with the metal slugs. Lt. Carper plans to have the company number and also a serial number on the slugs.

Evidently the serial number plan did not work out—probably the cost to number the tokens was prohibitive and the gain would be minimal, considering the bookkeeping necessary to use a serial number. But the net result is that the tokens we will now know as MRBL-1 were ordered early in 1935, when the camp was at Marble Creek. Since the company changed numbers in May of that year, it is possible that the tokens never actually saw use. More research is needed on Company 1970, but the trail of proof that the tokens were used beyond 1935 is getting thin.

Has anyone seen an Idaho CCC ticket or ticket book? The only ones I am aware of were illustrated in an article by Russ Rulau in the May, 1974 *Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine*. James Fulton, an associate of Rulau's served in the CCC as part of Company 2527. As souvenirs of his tour in Idaho, he kept covers from \$1.00 scrip booklets issued by the Camp Exchange at the "winter camp", Camp Ponderosa, near Boise, and the "summer camp", Camp Ketchum at Sun Valley. He also saved one 5¢ ticket which was identified as CAMP EXCHANGE / 2527 Co.

This information brings up a couple of questions for which I'd like your input. First is the issue of what to say is a "new town". This CCC token was not used in a town; it was a camp in the woods. So, should we name the camp as a "town" and be done with it? Or should we worry about where the Post Office was and include it with the rest of the tokens from the nearby town? I have decided to designate the above token as Marble Creek even though the Marble Creek Post Office was discontinued in 1927 and mail for this CCC Camp went to St. Maries. I have not used the same logic, however, regarding the Idaho Correctional Complex token which was used at the State Penitentiary south of Boise's city limits. The earlier red fiber and green plastic Idaho State Penitentiary tokens were used at the "Old Pen" which is now inside the city limits. It was not inside the city limits when the tokens were in use, I believe.

The second question is whether to list scrip, paper "Good Fors", and the like. My original intent was to list metal, fiber, and plastic pieces only; no wooden nickels, bus tokens, or modern amusement tokens. But a number of pasteboard pieces have crept into my listing over the years, so I will include them. Opinions, anyone? I do feel that the wooden nickels, etc. need to be catalogued, but not by me at this time. I am also excluding many of the "storecard" pieces which do not indicate that they were "Good For" anything. Included are ones like the "Shorty's Place" tokens from Moscow which have a design on the reverse.

Rarity scale proposal

There will always be controversy over rarity and price scales in token catalogs. The market is not mature enough (read that to mean "The commonest token is far more rare than all but the most valuable U. S. coin.") to have established accurate rarities or prices for Idaho tokens. We should be able to develop a fairly accurate rarity scale since our collections represent the biggest ones known, but that will take time. Also, since token values are influenced by more than just rarity, I feel the need to include what I call a desirability factor. Here is what I propose to use for the Idaho checklist. Call it the URSA scale. I think you will find it fairly intuitive to use:

Desirability→		- Factors:	Standard	+ Factors:
		common town, maverick, plastic, etc.	<u>Factors</u>	rare/ghost town, dated, saloon, pictorial, etc.
Rarity	Qty.			
Unique	1-2	U-	U	U+
Rare	3-5	R-	R	R+
Scarce	6-24	S-	S	S+
Abundant	25+	A-	A	A+
Restrike			RS	

Remember that as we complete the census of the varieties we own, many pieces will move toward the Abundant end of the scale.

I don't want to give the restrike pieces the "honor" of a rarity, so they will just be listed as RS. Really, they are fantasy tokens, I suppose, since the reverse dies seldom match the ones used for the real tokens.

Reference material

As many of you know, I work for U S WEST Communications. Recently a non-profit, educational corporation called **The Telecommunications History Group, Inc.** was formed by a number of active and retired employee volunteers. Its primary goal is to preserve the history of the industry, primarily in the 14-state region served by U S WEST. I believe that U S WEST has turned over many of the archives of the corporation to the THG, including the records of its predecessor companies Mountain Bell, Pacific Northwest Bell, the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co., the Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Co., etc. In talking to the head guy at THG, Herb Hackenburg (author of the history of Mountain Bell), included were complete sets of all telephone directories for the region. These directories, about 3 million pages worth, will be made available to historical societies on microfilm or CD-ROM if the money to film or scan them can be raised.

Colorado's lottery raises money specifically designated for historical preservation, so Herb is applying for funding from that source to film the Colorado directories. I have contacted Steve Guerber, Acting Director of the Idaho Historical Society (also ex-Mayor of Eagle and

ex-Public Relations Director of U S WEST) to see if he could come up with funding for the Idaho directories. If any of you have good ideas on how to fund this project, please let me know. I have no idea how much it would cost, but the advantage would be availability across the state of these great reference sources.

There are several varieties of the brass Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Co. tokens. I am not sure whether they were ever actually used in Idaho, but Frank Schell designated them as #H-6 since Hailey was the location of the first Bell telephone central office in the state, with service established in September of 1883. On July 17, 1911, the Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Company was bought by the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company.



The "ONE LOCAL SWITCH" tokens were usually used as part of a franchise agreement between the company and the town where they were used. If it was written into the franchise, the telephone company allowed the city a certain number of calls from pay telephones each month. Policemen, firemen, and town patrolmen were issued the town's allowance of these tokens to make a local call (i.e. have "Central", the operator, switch a call to its destination). The telephone company would retrieve the tokens from the pay phone and reuse them. The rate for a local call was 5¢ at the time, so the tokens were 21mm, the size of a nickel.

Best,

John D. Mutch
7931 Crestwood Drive
Boise, ID 83704-3022